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Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 September 2013

[*without reference to a Main Committee (A/68/L.2)*]

68/1. Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 45/264 of 13 May 1991, 48/162 of 20 December 1993, 50/227 of 24 May 1996, 52/12 B of 19 December 1997, 57/270 B of 23 June 2003, 60/265 of 30 June 2006, 61/16 of 20 November 2006 and 65/285 of 29 June 2011,

Recalling also its resolution 66/288 of 27 July 2012, by which it endorsed the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want",

Recalling further its resolution 67/290 of 9 July 2013,

Reaffirming the role that the Charter of the United Nations and the General Assembly have vested in the Economic and Social Council, and recognizing the need for a more effective Council as a principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development, as well as for implementation of the international development goals agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Development Goals,

Reaffirming also the commitment to and emphasizing the need to strengthen the Economic and Social Council, within its mandate under the Charter as a principal organ of the United Nations, in the integrated and coordinated follow-up of the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields, and recognizing the key role of the Council in achieving a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development,

Recalling its resolution 67/199 of 21 December 2012, including the decision to hold open, transparent and inclusive consultations to review and explore the modalities of the financing for development process, including possible arrangements to strengthen the process, as well as options for bringing together the various processes covering development financing in an integrated manner, taking

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into account the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on modalities of the financing for development follow-up process,[1]

Noting the processes related to the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the acceleration of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda,

1. *Takes note* of the note by the President of the General Assembly on the review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council;[2]

2. *Also takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council;[3]

3. *Adopts* the text contained in the annex to the present resolution, and calls upon the Economic and Social Council and other relevant bodies of the United Nations system to implement the measures contained therein in an expeditious manner;

4. *Decides* that the arrangements contained in the present resolution and its annex will be reviewed at its seventy-second session.

2nd plenary meeting
20 September 2013

Annex

Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council

1. In accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Economic and Social Council should continue to strengthen its role as the central mechanism for coordination of the activities of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies and supervision of subsidiary bodies in the economic, social, environmental and related fields. It should provide overall guidance and coordination to the United Nations development system and promote a coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of major international conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields. The working modalities of the Council should be guided by the principles of inclusiveness, transparency and flexibility. The Council should aim at creating synergy and coherence as well as avoiding duplication between its deliberations and those of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

2. The Economic and Social Council shall continue to consider reports of intergovernmental and inter-agency bodies and mechanisms for coordination and recommend ways to enhance their efficiency, accountability, interaction and complementarity of efforts.

3. In the follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits, the Economic and Social Council should ensure the harmonization and coordination of the agendas

[1] A/67/353.

[2] A/67/975.

[3] A/67/736-E/2013/7.

and work programmes of the functional commissions by promoting a clearer division of labour among them and providing clear policy guidance to them. To that end, better preparation of the meetings of the Council should be pursued.

4. The arrangements set forth in the present annex should not lead to an increase in the number of meeting days currently provided for the Economic and Social Council.

5. The Economic and Social Council shall adjust its programme of work to a July-to-July cycle with immediate effect and is invited to consider transitional arrangements for the election of its Bureau, taking into account the relevant rules, regulations and practices with regard to the work of the Council, its subsidiary bodies and United Nations funds and programmes.

6. The Economic and Social Council needs a strengthened issues-based approach to enhance its lead role in identifying emerging challenges and promoting reflection, debate and innovative thinking, as well as in achieving a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

7. The Economic and Social Council shall base its annual programme of work on a main theme that will:

(*a*) Be determined at the beginning of its cycle;

(*b*) Be selected taking into account the role of the Council in promoting the balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, as well as the post-2015 development agenda;

(*c*) Be decided by the Council based on inputs from its subsidiary bodies, as well as Member States;

(*d*) Provide guidance to the work of its entire system while respecting the agenda, diversity of mandates and specialized expertise of the various subsidiary bodies;

(*e*) Enable the Council to promote system-wide coherence and coordination of issues requiring the effective response of the United Nations system.

8. The Economic and Social Council shall invite its subsidiary bodies and the governing bodies of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies to contribute, as appropriate, to its work in keeping with the agreed theme.

9. A proposal for the annual theme will be made by the President of the Economic and Social Council in consultation with the subsidiary bodies and Member States, initially for the two following cycles and subsequently for the following year, in order to give ample time for input from subsidiary bodies and Member States.

10. The Economic and Social Council shall continue to have one substantive and one organizational session. To ensure a more responsive Council, it may convene special sessions in accordance with its rules of procedure. The Council, as a principal organ of the United Nations, is also entitled to hold ad hoc meetings as and when needed to address urgent developments in the economic, social, environmental and related fields.

11. The current segment structure of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council will be revised, with a redistribution of working days, as outlined below:

(*a*) An operational activities for development segment will be held immediately following the first regular sessions of the executive boards of the funds and programmes of the United Nations system. Through this segment the Council should provide overall coordination and guidance for operational development funds and programmes on a system-wide basis. Such guidance should include objectives, priorities and strategies in the implementation of the policies formulated by the General Assembly, including the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, and should concentrate on cross-cutting and coordination issues related to operational activities. Efforts should focus on improving the overall impact of operational activities of the United Nations system in support of national development priorities. With a view to avoiding repetition of discussions, the governing boards that report to the Council should be requested to highlight in their reports to the Council the issues requiring examination and identify actions to be taken, guided by the chosen main theme. National officials directly involved in the implementation of national development strategies, as well as field-level representatives of the United Nations system, should be encouraged to participate in the segment in order for their contributions to be taken into account. Contribution of the segment to the preparations for the quadrennial policy review of operational activities, through which the Assembly establishes key system-wide policy orientations for the development cooperation and country-level modalities of the United Nations system, should be continued;

(*b*) A humanitarian affairs segment will be held in June, through which the Council should continue to contribute to strengthening the coordination and effectiveness of United Nations humanitarian assistance and support and complement international efforts aimed at addressing humanitarian emergencies, including natural disasters, in order to promote an improved, coordinated response by the United Nations. The Council should also continue to hold a special event to discuss the transition from relief to development, to be convened immediately preceding the humanitarian affairs segment and following the annual session of the executive boards of the funds and programmes of the United Nations system;

(*c*) A high-level segment will be held in July. It will continue to discharge the functions of the high-level segment of the Council as provided for in General Assembly resolutions 45/264 of 13 May 1991, 48/162 of 20 December 1993, 50/227 of 24 May 1996 and 61/16 of 20 November 2006, in particular the biennial two-day Development Cooperation Forum, unless otherwise indicated in the present resolution or in resolution 67/290 of 9 July 2013. The segment will include the three-day ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development provided for in resolution 67/290. The outcome of the segment will be a ministerial declaration;

(*d*) Dedicated coordination and management meetings will be held regularly to perform the functions of the coordination and general segments as provided for in the General Assembly resolutions mentioned in paragraph 11 (*c*) above. The timing of these meetings shall be decided by the Council;

(*e*) An integration segment shall be held annually, the timing and modalities of which shall be decided by the Council. The main functions of the segment will be to consolidate all the inputs of Member States, the subsidiary bodies of the Council, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders and to promote the

balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The integration segment will bring together the key messages from the Council system on the main theme and develop action-oriented recommendations for follow-up.

12. The Economic and Social Council should conduct an annual dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions.

13. The Economic and Social Council should continue to strengthen and further promote dialogue on and implementation of the financing for development agenda, inter alia, by strengthening existing arrangements, including the special high-level meeting with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to be held immediately following the annual spring meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee of the Boards of Governors of the Bank and the Fund on the Transfer of Real Resources to Developing Countries held in Washington, D.C. The Council should also continue to allocate specific time for deliberation and consideration of the follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development.

14. The Economic and Social Council should promote interaction with relevant international and regional forums, organizations and groupings that make policy recommendations or take policy decisions with global implications, as appropriate.

15. In scheduling the above-mentioned sessions, meetings and consultations, the Economic and Social Council should take into consideration meetings of other bodies dealing with economic, social and environmental issues to avoid unnecessary overlapping and overburdening of their agendas.

16. The Economic and Social Council shall hold the regular meetings of its substantive sessions in New York and the humanitarian affairs segment shall continue to alternate between New York and Geneva. On an ad hoc and cost-effective basis, another United Nations location could be decided upon if that would contribute to a better discussion on the chosen main theme.

17. With a view to continuously improving the interaction with and follow-up to the work of its subsidiary bodies, the Economic and Social Council should conduct action-oriented reviews of the activities, reports and recommendations of its subsidiary bodies, avoiding a repetition of the debates held in those bodies and focusing attention on issues that require a prioritized and coordinated substantive response from the United Nations system as a whole. The subsidiary bodies should include in their reports an executive summary, and the reports should be concise, clearly identifying the conclusions and recommendations and issues that may require attention and/or action by the Council.

18. The Economic and Social Council should make transitional arrangements for holding the annual ministerial review during the high-level segments in 2014 and 2015.

19. The Economic and Social Council should devote time to the specific needs of countries in special situations, namely the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries, the small island developing States and Africa and integrate their concerns into all segments as cross-cutting priorities. It will continue to address the particular development challenges of middle-income countries.

20. In line with its earlier decision, the Economic and Social Council will include in its annual ministerial review in 2015 a review of the implementation of the

Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action).[4] The Development Cooperation Forum should continue to take into consideration the Istanbul Programme of Action when it reviews the trends in international development cooperation, as well as policy coherence for development. The Council also should continue to review and coordinate the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

21. The Economic and Social Council should take steps to strengthen the consideration of issues affecting small island developing States in keeping with the mandate of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados Programme of Action)[5] and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.[6]

22. The Economic and Social Council has an important role as a platform for multi-stakeholder participation and for engaging all relevant stakeholders in the work of the Council, particularly with respect to its function related to the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

23. While retaining its intergovernmental nature, the Economic and Social Council shall seek to promote the active participation of major groups, non-governmental organizations, other relevant stakeholders and regional organizations in the activities of the Council and its functional and regional commissions, in accordance with the provisions of their respective rules of procedure and the provisions of General Assembly resolution 67/290 insofar as it pertains to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Council.

24. The Economic and Social Council should further promote the integration of youth into its deliberations, building on the past positive experiences of the informal youth forums. The Council should also continue with the informal partnership forum.

25. The Secretary-General should make proposals to promote collaboration across the United Nations system, taking account of the functions of a strengthened Economic and Social Council, with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat serving as a central hub of support for the Council, in order to better utilize existing resources of the United Nations system to broaden support to the Council and its Bureau. The proposals should include measures to enable the Secretariat to better support the implementation of a unified development agenda. Similarly, the Secretary-General should explore proposals to strengthen support to the Council, including to the office of the President of the Council.

26. The Secretary-General should take steps to enable adequate institutional focus on the needs of small island developing States and provide effective support for the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

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[4] *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9–13 May 2011* (A/CONF.219/7), chap. II.

[5] *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April–6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[6] *Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Port Louis, Mauritius, 10–14 January 2005* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.II.A.4 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

27. The annual programme of work of the Economic and Social Council should provide for enhancing regular dialogue with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, taking into account relevant Council and General Assembly resolutions, including Assembly resolution 67/226 of 21 December 2012 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

28. Resolutions and decisions of the Economic and Social Council should be implemented and followed up fully by all relevant parts of the United Nations system. This process should be monitored by the Council and the General Assembly on a regular basis, as appropriate.

29. The Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, especially its Second and Third Committees, need to consider and take steps towards the rationalization of their agendas, with a view to eliminating duplication and overlap and promoting complementarity in the consideration and negotiation of similar or related issues.

30. The Presidents of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly are requested to coordinate with the bureaux of relevant organs and intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations, including the Peacebuilding Commission, in order to achieve maximum synergy and effectiveness.

31. The Bureau of the Economic and Social Council should convene regular open-ended informal consultations of the Council to improve organizational and procedural as well as substantive aspects of the sessions of the Council, with a view to highlighting the issues and recommendations that require consideration and action by the Council in order to have more focused and well-prepared substantive sessions. This may involve, as appropriate, dialogues with the chairs and the secretariats of the relevant functional commissions, other subsidiary and related bodies and executive boards.

32. The Bureau of the Economic and Social Council should continue to meet on a regular basis to consider issues such as recommendations on agenda items and subjects, the structure of meetings and lists of guest participants for panel discussions, and should be kept informed, when appropriate and in the context of its organizational efforts, of the deliberations of relevant intergovernmental mechanisms outside the United Nations system. The Bureau shall regularly brief the Council on its deliberations.

33. Members of the Bureau should communicate to the next session of the Economic and Social Council the working methods that have proved successful and the overall experience acquired.

34. The Economic and Social Council should further consider ways to improve its public profile, including by effectively communicating its role, work and achievements to the public in a compelling manner.